

VZCZCXRO9078
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1306/01 1181734
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271734Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7059
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001306

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2018
TAGS: [IZ](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [SENV](#)
SUBJECT: IESC MEETING APRIL 25: SADR CITY SERVICES

Classified By: Baghdad PRT Team Leader Andrew A. Passen for reasons 1.4
(b,d).

11. (SBU) Summary: In place of an absent Prime Minister al-Maliki, National Security Advisor Muwafak al-Rubaie chaired the April 26 Iraq Executive Steering Committee (IESC) in support of the Baghdad Security Plan (Fardh al-Qanoon) FaQ). The meeting focused entirely on the situation in Sadr City. The meeting highlighted that there is not a humanitarian crisis in Sadr City, but that services have eroded and that continued insecurity and checkpoint access constraints are inhibiting their improvement. End Summary.

Access

12. (SBU) Several IESC attendees, including the Minister of Education, the Deputy Minister for Trade, the Minister of Health and the Mayor of Baghdad City identified increased access for their employees to cordoned areas as the priority requirement to improve services and welfare in Sadr City. Citing tactical security operations and continued Special Groups threats, Baghdad Commander Gen. Aboud rejected a request from the Mayor to expand the number of entry points in Sadr City or to dedicate a new checkpoint specifically for municipal vehicles. (Note: Baghdad PRT and MND-B are involved in ongoing coordination with the Mayor's representatives to improve access to Sadr City. End Note.)

Money

13. (SBU) NSA Rubaie confirmed that the Council of Ministers had approved \$150 million in emergency spending for Sadr City and adjacent neighborhoods. However, as evidenced by the fact that Rubaie began the meeting by requesting nominations for a person to lead a to-be-formed committee to allocate the funds, no plan for the funding has yet been created. The Mayor stated forcefully that the money that he has already allocated for service improvement in Sadr City is sufficient, and that it would be counter-productive to attempt to spend it in areas where fighting continues. The Deputy Minister of Trade stated that due to increased global commodity prices her Ministry was already facing a deficit in spending and would be unable to deliver the Prime Minister-mandated double monthly ration without receipt of an additional \$37 million. The Deputy Minister also noted that to ensure sufficient rations for the entire country for the coming year her ministry would need an extra \$9 billion.

Coordination

14. (SBU) Minister of Oil Sharistani and others highlighted that due to the access problems caused by checkpoints and curfews, improved inter-ministerial coordination with the Baghdad Operations Command is essential. Gen. Aboud agreed with Rubaie's recommendation that each ministry assign an imbedded liaison to the BOC for the duration of the 'Sadr City Crisis.'

¶5. (SBU) The Mayor asked that MNF-I forces coordinate with the Amanat on the placement of concrete barriers. He stated that some of the recent barriers are clogging drains and have broken sewage pipes, which could be avoided if moved a few meters one way or the other.

Authority

¶6. (SBU) In response to Gen. Aboud's comments that the proposed ministerial liaisons to the BOC be empowered with decision making authority, Baghdad Provincial Council Chairman Mueen al-Khademy forcefully stated that there should be only one coordinating body for ground-level service delivery response in Baghdad -- and that it should reside at the provincial government level. Ahmed Chalabi, head of the Services Committee, stated that duplication with his committee should be avoided and that a special committee to respond to the situation in Sadr City was not needed. NSA Rubaie stated that he would send the varying views, including the proposal to form a new services committee specifically for Sadr City, to the absent PM Maliki for decision.

¶7. (C) Comment: The varying views regarding coordination authority illustrate the evolving nature of GoI institutions. Baghdad's provincial government, if given the proper authority from the national government, may prove to have the most legitimate and sustainable ability to coordinate the many service-providing institutions in Baghdad. While Chalabi serves as an effective ad hoc services 'ombudsman,' his committee has neither the budget nor the skill-set to

BAGHDAD 00001306 002 OF 002

coordinate on a wider range of issues. However, it is notable that Chalabi is the only non-security related IESC member reported to have visited Sadr City in recent weeks, indicating his continued willingness and ability to go where others fear to tread. End Comment.

Status of Sadr City Education

¶8. (SBU) The Minister of Education stated that 40 percent of schools remain closed and that students risk losing a year's worth of academic credit if they are unable to prepare and take part in June's year-end tests. The Minister also complained about the inability of 300 teachers and employees to access Sadr City and asserted that the MNF-I's occupation of an administration building resulted in his inability to pay teachers due to lack of access to personnel files held within. (Note: Baghdad PRT and MND-B reports that on-the-ground coordination has permitted access to this facility on a number of recent occasions. End Note.)

¶9. (C) Commanding General Petraeus responded strongly to statements from the Minister of Education stating that MNF-I is attacking schools. CG Petraeus stated that Special Groups were using schools to launch rockets and for sniper attacks. Both the Minister of Defense and NSA Rubaie backed up the CG and noted that in addition to attacking several ISF and MNF-I soldiers, a Special Groups sniper had shot several children from a school building.

Status of Sadr City Food Rations

¶10. (SBU) The Deputy Ministry of Trade stated that much of the Public Distribution System rations for March and April have been delivered with the exception of flour, which was in short supply. The Deputy Minister noted that future ration deliveries would not be cleared for delivery unless they could be tested and that the Rusafa (east Baghdad) testing lab was currently inaccessible due to insecurity. The Minister of Health offered to have the testing done at his labs.

Status of Sadr City Health Services

¶11. (SBU) The Minister of Health stated that the overall status of hospitals and clinics is good, with only 2 clinics closed and the Habibiya pediatric hospital now open and operating at 50 percent of capacity. However, he noted that the inability of ambulances to efficiently enter and exit Sadr City is causing problems. Both Gen. Aboud and the Minister of Defense stated that stolen ambulances were often used to transport rockets and suggested that Ministry of Health officials be assigned to checkpoints to coordinate access.

Status of Sadr City Fuel Products

¶12. (SBU) Minister of Oil Sharistani stated that fuel product supply in Baghdad is good and that production is at record highs. The Minister stated that although 52 out of 72 supply trucks recently sent to Sadr City were unable to enter, this was not of great concern because curfew restrictions and fighting had reduced driving and the demand for benzene. Sharistani highlighted that supplies of kerosene and butane merit monitoring.

Status of Sadr City Water

¶13. (SBU) The Mayor stated that several key water mains and sewage pipes have been blown up by Special Groups or damaged by air strikes. He stated that he is finding it difficult to get workers on site for repairs due to the fact that some of them feel threatened by Jaysh al-Mahdi, while other municipal workers likely sympathize with JAM.

CROCKER